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(WASHINGTON, D.C.) -- Today, Rep. Russ Carnahan issued the following statement on Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak's decision to step down:

“Egypt has long been a strategic partner for U.S. security interests in the region, and what happens in Egypt has a direct impact on families and businesses in Missouri. This announcement is a positive step, and an historic opportunity – and major challenge – for the people of Egypt to establish a government that’s responsive to their hopes and needs.”

“The challenges Egypt faces in the days ahead are vast. Instituting democratic reforms will require more than holding free and fair elections – a difficult undertaking in and of itself – but real change will require a significant commitment to rule of law and comprehensive institutional reform. I hope that Egypt’s transitional leaders recognize the importance of an orderly change and take the necessary steps to aid Egyptian society in making these needed reforms.”

“The U.S. must stand ready to support an Egyptian-led transition and reform process that respects universal freedoms, human rights, and the democratic aspirations of the Egyptian people.”

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Russ Carnahan is a member of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs. He is the Ranking Member on the Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, and a voting member of the Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, and Human Rights.